

LAW AND ORDER

A Short Story

By K'wan

“LITTLE GIRL LOST”

Dena’s arm felt like it was full of sand when she lifted it to quiet her blaring alarm clock. Her mind told her to stay in bed for another ten minutes, but she knew that if she closed her eyes there was no telling what time she would open them again, and there was too much on her plate to get a late start. Grudgingly she sat up and prepared to face the day.

Her sleepy eyes swept what had been her domain for the last seven months and sighed. The kitchenette apartment was slightly bigger than her mother’s living room and twice as cluttered with her clothes, books and other knickknacks that Dena hadn’t been able to bring herself to part with when she moved out. She’d initially been excited about finally getting her freedom papers, but what she quickly realized was that the world was a very cold place, especially when you were alone.

School was killing her, and since she had a full schedule and could only work part time, the bills were piling up. It felt like the world would swallow her at any minute, but she still refused to go back to her mother's. Her sister and everyone else said that she wouldn't be able to make it on her own and she was determined to show them different.

After taking a quick shower, she fried the last egg she had in her empty refrigerator and headed for the door. Her home girl Mo would be there soon to pick her up and she didn't feel like hearing her mouth about being late. Mo was a pain in the ass, but she was the best friend a girl could ask for. When Black Ice had stolen her innocence and ripped her heart out, it had been Mo who was there for her. Dena was the one who had been violated, but Mo took it harder than she did, vowing to make sure Black Ice got his day. God must have been listening, because Black Ice came to a very brutal end at the hands of her older brother Shannon.

A few months after the ordeal at the party, Shannon ran up on Black Ice in broad daylight and shot him dead in front of at least fifty witnesses. Everyone in the hood knew what Black Ice was about, so it was no surprise when the chickens had come home to roost. In the eyes of the mothers who had lost their daughters to Ice and men like him, Shannon was a hero, so most refused to speak to police when they came around asking questions about the murder, but there were always the few who were willing to barter the life of another when it came to saving their own asses. The police now had a name, but apprehending the suspect would prove to be far trickier than they'd thought. The police searched high and low for Shannon, but they never found him and hopefully they never would.

Part of Dena felt like it was her fault. Granted, she didn't ask Shannon to kill Ice, but she knew that he intended to and did nothing to stop him. Maybe a little piece of her wanted her one-time lover to feel the fire as she had. For as much as she hated Ice, she still carried some guilt about the whole thing. Not for Ice being dead, because after what he'd done to her, death was far too merciful. She just wished that she hadn't lost her brother in the exchange. Shannon had always been there to help steer her through life and she had needed him then more than ever.

Dena put the finishing touches on her make-up and grabbed her purse. When she got to her door she noticed that someone had slipped an envelope under the door. She cautiously picked it up and peeked inside. There was a pink birthday card stuffed with hundred dollar bills. She gasped when she read the inscription. *Happy birthday, lil sis.* Dena flung her door open and bolted into the hallway. She searched the elevator and both staircases, but there was no sign of the courier.

Dena slid down against the hallway wall with the card clutched close to her heart. "Thanks Shannon." She whispered.

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BEEEP!

BEEEP!

Monique was slapping the horn of her Ford Explorer like she was trying to kill a family of ants. A bottle shattered a few feet away from her truck causing her to stop. Mo stuck her head out the window and shouted. "If that had hit my truck I'd have whipped everybody's ass who has a window on this side of the building until I figured out who did

it!" she threatened. "Ghetto ass niggaz," Monique said before checking her lipstick in the rearview mirror.

Monique was a pretty girl, a little of on the heavy side, but that didn't stop her from carrying herself like she was a size eight. Some of the outfits she wore were downright shameful, but Mo had never cared much about people's opinions. Whenever she stepped out of the house she had to make sure she was tight. Even if she was just going to the store she had to make sure her hair was combed. You'd never catch Mo out in a scarf. She was a diva and whoever didn't like it could kiss her ass.

"Why the hell are you out here making all that noise? Are you trying to get me evicted?" Dena scolded as she approached the car.

Mo rolled her eyes. "Please, they ain't putting nobody outta this raggedy mutha fucka. They need to be glad people are still renting in here. And if you hadn't been taking so long I wouldn't have had to be all over this horn." She slapped it once more for good measure, startling Dena.

"Stop that!"

"Quit complaining and get in the damn car before you end up late for this job interview, or do you like working in K-mart?" Mo folded her arms.

"Hell to the no!" Dena said. Any kind of job was better than being broke, but standing on her feet for eight to ten hours a day was killing her. She made to walk around to the passenger side door when a blue Caprice pulled up beside Mo's truck. Dena sucked her teeth because she already knew what would happen next and she didn't feel like dealing with it.

“If I didn’t know any better I’d think you weren’t happy to see me.” Detective Snyder capped as he pulled his chubby frame from the Caprice. He was a short, balding man, who wore the same pea-green suit every day. When he flashed his coffee-stained teeth at her, Dena felt like she was going to vomit.

“I don’t have time for this shit this morning,” Dena snapped.

“Well you’d better make time, because you and I have unfinished business.” Snyder shot back.

Dena folded her arms. “Look, y’all have been asking me the same shit for months and my answer ain’t gonna change. I haven’t seen Shannon nor have I heard from him.”

“I think you’re lying,” Snyder accused.

“And I think that constitutes police harassment,” Mo added.

“If I were you I’d mind my business, young lady. I wonder what would pop up if I ran your driver’s license,” Snyder threatened Monique. This took some of the fight out of the girl because she wasn’t sure if her license was suspended or not for the tickets she’d amassed and forgot to pay. “Like I was saying, I have reason to believe that you’d been in contact with your brother.”

“Your reasoning is flawed, which is nothing new,” Dena said sarcastically.

“Oh, I doubt that.” Snyder smiled as if he was about to reveal some great secret. “A little bird told me that they saw Shannon coming out of this building not even an hour ago.”

Dena felt a lump form in her throat. “I don’t know who you’ve been talking to, but they need to get their eyes checked. My brother hasn’t been here.” She kept her face blank, but she could feel the fingers of sweat rolling down her back.

Snyder leaned in close enough for Dena to smell his rank breath. “Why don’t I believe you?”

“Okay, I’ve had about enough of this.” Mo jumped out of the truck and stormed around to stand in between them. “Now look,” she wagged a finger at Snyder, “y’all done already heard what the lawyer said about her not having to answer any more questions. You keep fucking around and we’re gonna bring a suit against the city and we’ll see how your smart ass likes that.”

Snyder looked like he wanted to slap the girl, but he kept himself in check. “Okay, if you wanna play hard ball I’m willing. You tell that murdering brother of yours that I will catch up with him, and I hope he’s armed when I do so I can blow his fucking head off. Have a nice day.” Snyder spat and got back in his Caprice. When he pulled off he purposely scratched the side of Mo’s truck with his mirror.

“Punk ass nigga!” Mo shouted at the fleeing Caprice. “I can’t stand his bitch ass,” Mo said while trying to rub the scratch out.

“That makes two of us.” Dena said jumped in the truck and slammed the door.

“That mutha fucka must’ve lost his mind. Shannon is too damn smart to duck his head back in New York, knowing his ass is as hot as a firecracker. Ain’t that some crazy shit, Dena?”

“Yeah, crazy shit.” Dena said half heartedly. For the rest of the ride she just stared out the window wondering if her brother was alright.

“GOOD COP/BAD COP”

“Honey, aren’t you gonna eat your breakfast?” Sheila called from the kitchen where she was flipping pancakes and frying bacon at the same time.

“Don’t have time this morning. We’ve been assigned a new case.” He kissed his wife affectionately on the nose before snatching a piece of bacon. It scalded the roof of his mouth, but he still played it as cool as the other side of the pillow.

“You have got to be the hardest working man in law enforcement,” Sheila said.

Brown smiled at his wife. “Which is why they pay me the big bucks!”

“Try telling that to the collection of knock-off Prada bags I have in the closet,” she teased. “So is this another Shai Clark witch hunt or are you guys gonna finally pay the rest of the criminals of the world some attention?”

“Ha, ha. Very funny. I wouldn’t call keeping the streets safe for our children a witch hunt. You almost sound like the rest of the people he’s got duped into believing he’s the second coming of Bumpy Johnson. I don’t care how many free turkeys or toys you give away, if you break the law then I’m on your ass!” he said heatedly.

“I was only joking, honey. What’s with you?” Sheila dried her hands on the dish towel and turned to face her husband.

Brown let out a heavy sigh. “I’m sorry, baby. I’ve just got a lot on my mind lately. I don’t wish death on anyone, but when they killed Poppa I thought we’d finally crumble the Clark house of cards, and this shit bird pops up out of left field and we’re back to square one. To the general public he’s the noble son of a respected businessman who has brought jobs and revenue back to the ghetto, but I know that cocksucker for the lying murderer he really is. At least with Poppa and Tommy they wore their criminal ties like a badge of honor, but Shai has got the world fooled with that innocent kid act he puts on. If you ask me, he’s worse than both of them put together.”

“Have you guys come any closer to bringing him down?” Sheila asked. Her husband and his partner had been chasing the Clarks for so long that she was just as familiar with the family as anyone on the force.

“For a minute it looked that way. There was a kid who worked for the family who was willing to testify in exchange for immunity on a kingpin charge, but that went all to shit. The day before he was supposed to go before the grand jury they found him dead in his cell. The coroner called it suicide, but how the hell do you cut your own tongue out and then hang yourself? Shai had him killed, but we haven’t been able to prove it. As if

things weren't complicated enough with this guy, he's birthed about a dozen little Shai Clarks that are breaking fool in Harlem," he said as he tapped the folder he was carrying.

"So the new case is connected to Shai?"

Brown thought on it for a minute. "The brass seems to think so, but I don't buy it just yet. He's a power player in the streets, but I can't connect him with any of Shai's capos, which unusual. Just about every scum bag dealer, pimp, or thief in the hood can be traced back to one of Shai's capos except this guy. Normally when some one decides to set up shop in Harlem without clearance from Shai or one of the capos they end up whacked, but this dude is still going strong."

"Maybe he's working for someone else?" she suggested.

"I doubt it. There's only one other guy who had the muscle and the guns to set something like that in motion and he's locked up. This kid is like a spook that popped up outta nowhere. But rest assured, this monkey is gonna fall in line like everybody else."

"You just be careful out there, baby. You know these young guys are more dangerous than the old timers because human life has so little value to them."

"Don't stress over it baby," he kissed her lightly on the lips. "If its one thing I've learned about dealing with these little fucks is to shoot first, ask questions later, and let Internal Affairs sort it out."

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Jose Alvarez awoke to the sound of his alarm clock blaring. He peeled his saliva stained face from the pillow and tried to focus on anything but the throbbing pain in his head. His

friend Brown had tried to tell him that it was a bad idea, but he couldn't help it. Ever since college he'd been a sucker for a good party.

When Alvarez tried to roll out of bed, something blocked his path. At first he thought it was a pillow, but pillows don't have tattoos of music notes on their asses. He couldn't remember her name, but he remembered her technique. It was the first time he'd ever almost lost consciousness while getting a blow job. The girl was truly gifted. He'd met her at a club the night before, and one thing ended up leading to another. He knew that Brown would frown on his little adventure, but he intended to rub it in his face anyhow. After taking a quick shower, Alvarez dressed in a deep chocolate suit and black shirt, opting to go without a tie. After checking himself in the mirror for a full ten minutes, Alvarez decided that he was ready for the world to receive him.

"Rise and shine," Alvarez sang, drawing back the curtains and letting the sunlight in. The girl stirred only long enough to burrow further into the blankets. Alvarez sighed and snatched the blanket away, exposing her well-proportioned naked body. "Come on, baby. This ain't no flop house. Time to go."

"Just twenty more minutes," she whined.

"Nothing doing, I got moves to make," Alvarez said. He only had a few minutes before he was to meet Brown downstairs and didn't feel like arguing with him over time again.

On the other side of the bed a second figure stirred. Her friend had a better body, but she was far more beautiful. "Bull shit, what do you have to do that's so important?" she asked in a thick accent that Alvarez couldn't quite place. The smug look on her face was replaced by one of fear when he slipped a black Glock into the holster under his arm.

Alvarez smiled. “Easy baby I ain’t a bad guy, I catch them.” He hooked the gold shield onto his belt. “Now hurry up and get before y’all make me late for work.” Alvarez smacked them on their asses on his way out of the room.

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Detective Brown wrapped his fingers impatiently on the steering wheel of his eighty-nine Buick, occasionally checking his watch. He was a stickler for time, something his drill sergeant father had instilled him since he was a boy. For every minute that passed he got a little more irritated. “Fucking J.” he cursed.

Brown and Alvarez had been partners for eight years and had a higher conviction rate than any pair in the district. They had a chemistry that went beyond scientific explanation when it came to catching criminals, but other than that they were like night and day. Brown was a straight laced cop who believed in hard work and doing everything by the book, while Alvarez was considered a slacker who was always willing to cut corners, and if necessary, bend the law to get the job done. He had been written up on several occasions, but the brass always showed leniency because he was one of the best cops on the force. The duo of Brown and Alvarez were thorns in the sides of their superiors, but they were the stuff of nightmares to the criminals on the street. Once they were set on your trail they wouldn’t rest until you were brought down.

Just as he was about to call Alvarez on the phone he spotted him coming out of his apartment building with what looked like two prostitutes. Alvarez was grinning like a shire cat and whispering only God knew what to the two girls. After kissing them each on

the cheek, he put them in a taxi and sauntered across the street to where his partner was waiting for him.

“Please tell me those weren’t prostitutes,” Brown said as soon as Alvarez got in the car.

“Brown, just because you see two scantily clad women out early in the morning doesn’t mean they were prostitutes,” Alvarez said.

“I didn’t ask if they were prostitutes because of how they were dressed, I asked because they were keeping company with you,” Brown teased. “Must have been some party last night?”

“Shit, I had a blast. You should’ve rolled with me, partner.”

“I don’t think my wife would’ve appreciated that,” Brown said.

“Hell, the only way she’d have found out is if you’d told her,” Alvarez shot back.

“Unlike some of us I have morals, J.”

“I got morals too; I just don’t exercise them much. So what’s on the agenda for today?” Alvarez relaxed in his seat and lit a cigarette. Brown tossed an envelope onto his lap.

“We’re gonna do a little recon in the hood today and see what the deal is with that dude.” Brown explained as he pulled the Buick into traffic.

“Doesn’t look like any one I know. Is he with Shai or one of the others?” Alvarez studied the picture of the brown-skinned man. He didn’t look to be more than twenty-something, but it was usually the babies who were the most dangerous.

“From what we know so far he’s an independent. Got his own hood right in the middle of Shai’s turf.” Brown said.

“And Swann or one of those guys hasn’t put his brains on the curb yet? Must be one bad mutha fucka.” Alvarez joked.

“That’s what they’re saying. I hear even the old heads respect him; he’s supposed to be some kind of *throwback* hustler, whatever the fuck that means. The boy runs an airtight ship, but we were able to find a kink in his armor. The new boss has stepped in shit and we get to rub his face in it.”

“Sweet. So what do they call this cocksucker?”

“Duhan.”

“O.T.”

“Man, if I’d had to spend one more second in that truck I would’ve got out and walked the rest of the way,” Teddy said stretching. He was a portly cat who rocked his hair in a tapered afro that blended perfectly into his beard.

“I’d have paid to see your ass hot footing it on the Turnpike,” Ruben joked while trying to get the kinks out of his back. No matter how many times he took the trip, he didn’t think he’d ever get used to cramming his six-four frame into a vehicle for almost four hours. His shifty black eyes scanned the area surrounding the gas station as if he could see things no one else could. “I’m glad we’re finally here. I’m gonna call a few bitches I got on deck down this way and let them know we’re in the town.”

“Don’t get too comfortable. I don’t plan to be here any longer than we have to.” Duhan told him while running his hands over his wavy black hair. It was something he often did when he was irritated or uneasy, and at that moment he was the latter.

“Chill the fuck out, Du. We gonna get back to New York, but lets at least look around the town for a minute,” Teddy suggested. His eyes were glued on the backside of a shapely young lady who was filling up her Honda.

“Sack wit them broads on your personal time. We came down here to conduct business so lets do that and keep it moving.” Duhan had said in a tone that let Teddy know it wasn’t up for negotiation. The trip to Baltimore had been on short notice, which wasn’t Duhan’s style, but the deal Ruben’s people had laid out was too sweet to pass up.

From the time Duhan had first felt the touch of a crisp hundred dollar bill between his fingers, he knew what his calling was in life. He had the spirit of an old head and the heart of a lion. Let the hood tell it; Duhan was gonna be a boss one day. The opportunity came sooner than any of them had thought in the form of his supplier getting indicted. The supplier was looking at a lengthy bid and needed a lifeline on the streets while he was away, so he plugged Duhan into the people he got the drugs from in exchange for a share in the profits. Everyone thought Duhan was going to dead him once he was on, but the youngster kept true to the bargain. Once a month like clockwork he would drop one quarter of his earnings off to the man’s family. It was acts such as these which made Duhan such a classic player.

“Yo, hit ya peoples and told them we’re in the town?” Duhan checked the time on his watch again.

“Yeah, I hit them up as soon as we hit the exit,” Ruben said. He was a tall, light skinned cat with shifty eyes and a quick tongue. He was introduced to them by a mutual friend as a stand up guy, but there was something about him that Duhan just wasn’t feeling. That fact that he was connected to so many people made him useful but Duhan tried to avoid him outside of doing business.

“A’ight so let’s head out to the restaurant,” Duhan said.

“Nah, there’s been a change in plans. We’re gonna meet them at a Super 8 Motel on the Eastside.”

Duhan’s face darkened. “Who the fuck are you to change my plan?” It was common knowledge that Duhan didn’t too much care for Ruben, but he tolerated him because he was connected to some important people.

“Be easy, son,” Ruben raised his hands in surrender. “It wasn’t my idea. There’s some tension between my man’s peoples and some Westside niggaz that got out of hand and one of them got laid down. Between the police and the gun-boys, things are real uncomfortable if you’re an eastside cat getting caught up too far from home.”

“You and ya people must think I’m a fucking idiot,” Duhan snarled. “We walk into some bull shit motel and they rip us off for everything. My nigga, I’ve already seen that movie. On some real shit Ruben, if you wasn’t under the big homey I’d push ya shit back for trying to play me. We’re going home.”

Ruben looked genuinely hurt. “Duhan I can’t believe you’d even try to come at me like that. My dude, you know me and my fam so you know how we move on the streets, so you trying to call me a creep on the sly ain’t really what’s popping,” he said seriously. “Dog, I ain’t no square nigga so I’d never let one of these bamas change the game in the ninth inning. Check it, I agreed to change the spot but it was me who picked the Super 8 as the new spot. This way we’re holding the winning hand incase something screwy goes down.”

“I thought you said they were ya *peeps*?” Teddy added sarcastically.

“Fuck you fat boy, I know these niggaz, not grew up with them. I don’t trust nobody any further than I can throw them, including y’all dudes. All I know is that

there's too much bread riding on this to pass up, it's the reason we shot all the way down here. Duhan, y'all niggaz is eating off a nice-sized plate but why not make it a buffet?"

Duhan looked to Teddy who just shrugged. "Du, we stand to almost triple our money on this deal, but at the end of the day my loyalty is to you not a dollar. Whatever you decide I'm rolling with the home team."

Duhan weighed his dilemma. He hated going into situations half cocked, but Teddy and Ruben were right about it being too much bread to pass up. If they flaked on the deal they could potentially lose the Baltimore connect and end up back to square one, which would be looking for an out of town spot to set up and a good heroin connection. Before he could dwell on it further, his cell phone vibrated.

"What's good, ma?" Duhan smiled into the phone.

"Missing you, daddy," Tionna replied in her sultry tone. Duhan was blessed to have one of the baddest chicks in the hood as the mother of his two sons. Tionna was tall with rich chocolate skin and long hair that had never seen a perm. On a scale of one to ten she was an eleven, but more importantly she was his.

"That's what I like to hear, baby. What are you up to today?"

"Not much, me and Gucci are out at the mall in Jersey picking up a few things."

Tionna said innocently.

Duhan frowned. "That means my stash is gonna be way light when I get back. How much did you spend already?"

"Not much."

"Tionna when you say not much that means it's at least three stacks." Duhan said.

“See, there you go. I only spent twenty-two hundred.” Tionna said as if it was a small amount.

Duhan ran his hand over his hair. “Tionna, I just hit you with four last week and now you tap me for another twenty-two? What the fuck else did you need?”

“These shoes Gucci showed me in this catalog.” She said.

“Tionna if you’re telling me that you spent two stacks on a pair of shoes I’m gonna kill you and Gucci when I get back to New York.”

Tionna sucked her teeth as if he was wrong for catching an attitude. “The shoes were eight-fifty, but I needed the proper accessories to bring them out properly. I don’t know why you tripping Duhan. It ain’t like we ain’t got it.”

Duhan stroked his waves more intensely. “Tionna I’m out here throwing stones at the fucking penitentiary and your ass is fucking up my money on shoes?”

“Oh, so now it’s your *money*?” she asked with an attitude.

“Tionna don’t even try that shit, because you know I never deny you anything. But you run through money like water. You need to slow down on buying unnecessary shit.”

“Do I say anything when your ass is at the haze spot two and three times a day?” she shot back.

“That’s a necessity.”

“Whatever, Duhan. Look, I’ll pay you back since it’s such a big deal.”

“With what? You ain’t got no job!” he reminded her.

“And I suppose what you do is work?”

“Watch your mouth on this phone.” He warned her.

“I’m mad, not stupid. But don’t worry I’m not totally without my resources. I’ll get ya punk ass two stacks back, mother has her ways.”

“And where are you gonna get it from, that saggy jawed mutha fucka Happy who you can’t seem to stay away from?” He caught her off guard with the remark.

“Duhan you need to stop listening to the ghetto gossip network. I ain’t seen that nigga in months,” Tionna lied.

“So that wasn’t you drinking with the cat at 420 the other night? Keep it a hundred because your little secret is already out.” He pressed her.

Tionna cursed herself for getting caught slipping. She’d thought that by kicking it with Happy way down on Seventy-Ninth Street she’d be able to avoid being spotted, but Duhan had eyes everywhere. “Duhan, I wasn’t drinking with him. Me and Gucci went to the bar and Happy happened to be there.”

“I thought you hadn’t seen him in months?”

“I haven’t, I mean like that.” She said, with her brain whirling trying to weave her lie together. “Yeah, he bought me a drink, but we didn’t chill together.” There was conviction in Tionna’s words, but Duhan didn’t believe her.

“Tionna, you’re gonna stop trying to play me like I’m some square ass nigga. I go above and beyond for you and every time I turn around you’re trying to beat me in the head with some bull shit. When are you gonna learn that I will kill a nigga over you?”

“Don’t be like that, baby. Just because a guy buys me a drink doesn’t mean I’m sleeping with him. This pussy has your name all over it.” she cooed.

“And your ass is gonna have my foot all in it if you don’t get it together.” He warned. “Where are my kids?”

“With Ms. Ronnie.”

Duhan shook his head. “They spend more time with Ronnie than they do with you. Well being that the kids aren’t at home you can clean up, right?” he asked sarcastically.

“I cleaned up already.” She lied. The house was still a mess from the car party she and Gucci had thrown the night before.

“Bullshit.” He coughed. “You can take a break from getting high with your shiftless ass friends and tighten the place up. Tionna, I paid too much money for that house for you to keep it like a project apartment.” Duhan had recently purchased a modest three-bedroom townhouse in Westchester County, complete with a spacious yard and finished basement. It had almost completely depleted his stash, but Tionna loved the house so much he had to get it for her. Nothing was too good for his boo.

“Yes, daddy.” She said sarcastically. “Anyway, go handle your business Duhan, and I’m gonna handle mine. When you get back the house will be clean and so will my pussy, so be prepared to go snorkeling.”

“You’re so fucking nasty,” he laughed.

“Only for you, daddy. I love you, baby.”

“I love you too, T,” he said into an empty phone because she had already hung up.

“Awww, if that ain’t the sweetest thing,” Teddy laughed at his friend.

“Fuck you, Teddy. Don’t get mad at me because I got a winner and you’re still trying to get a clue.” Duhan closed his phone.

“I’d rather be clueless than deal with all the bullshit you gotta go through. Dawg, you catch hell from your wife, your mistress and your jump off.” Teddy fell over laughing.

“Now I know you’ve fell and bumped your head. I run a tight ship.” Duhan boasted. He had always considered himself the lady’s man and getting engaged to Tionna hadn’t changed that.

“If your ship was so tight then you wouldn’t have lied to Tionna about what happened to your Yukon,” Teddy reminded him. Duhan hadn’t had the car for a month when he came outside one night to find the word cocksucker keyed into the rich black paint. He knew that one of his chicks did it, but wasn’t sure which one. Rather than have Tionna get wise to him cheating he told her that Teddy had been drunk one night and scratched it, which is why he had to take it to the shop to get painted. To that day none of his women had confessed to defacing his truck.

“Hey, if you can’t lie on your best friend, who can you lie on?” Duhan joked.

“Well if you’re done making nice on the phone have you decided what you wanna do about the meeting?”

Duhan thought on Tionna and her excessive spending. “Fuck it, set it up.”

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Duhan and his entourage had been at the Super 8 Motel for just over an hour when they finally heard the telltale knocking at the front door. The way Ruben flinched when he

heard it you'd have thought that the grim reaper was on the other side. But if it was death that had come calling that afternoon he would be in for a very unpleasant surprise.

“Quit sitting there looking stupid and open the door,” Duhan whispered to Ruben, who was staring nervously at the tech-nine Duhan was jamming between the mattresses.

“I don't see why you didn't leave that shit in the bag.” Ruben said.

“Because I don't know these niggaz, that's why.” Duhan positioned himself on the edge of the nightstand so that he was close enough to reach the tech if the .25 in his pocket failed him.

“Stop asking so many damn questions and open the door,” Teddy snapped. He too was nervous, but he did a better job of hiding it than Ruben. The bag of drugs sitting at his feet did little to ease his worries, but the fact that knowing he'd get a chunk of the take eased him a little.

Ruben smoothed over the imaginary wrinkles in his shirt one last time and opened the door.

From the word go Duhan didn't like the looks of Ruben's people. The first man into the room was a weasel-looking kid wearing a dusty Orioles cap and over-sized jeans. He gave the three New Yorkers the once over before nodding in approval, and clearing the way for the couple following him. The man was short and slightly overweight, but immaculately dressed in a Gucci running suit with matching sneakers. The girl wasn't much to look at, aside from her silicone breasts. These were Ruben's people and Duhan didn't like them.

“What up, boy?” the man in the Gucci suit greeted Ruben with a hug. If there was any warmth in the gesture, Duhan hadn’t noticed it. “These ya people got what I need?” he glanced at Teddy then Duhan.

“Yeah this is my man, Duhan. Duhan this is Big.” Ruben made the introduction. The man called Big flashed a toothy smile, but Duhan just nodded.

“Man, I was glad Ruben called me when he did because we have been suffering through a hell of a drought down here. Shit, dope still making it do what it do, but ain’t no good powder closer than Richmond and you know how they try to play,” Big said.

“I told you I was gonna take care of you, fam,” Ruben said. He was starting to loosen up, but there was still an edge to his voice.

“Fo sho, my nigga. A’ight, let me see what y’all putting down. My girl here will let me know if it’s right or not.” Big motioned to the female.

From his shirt pocket Teddy produced a small sandwich bag of cocaine and handed it to the girl, who had invited herself to a seat across the table from him. Using the spoon shaped charm around her neck she scooped a little of the powder onto her compact mirror and added another scoop to a vile of liquid she’d produced from her purse. Expertly she fashioned a straw from a dollar bill and took a deep snort of the powder. The moment the powder made contact with her brain, her nerves exploded. The sensation was so intense that she banged her knee on the writing table when she shot to her feet.

“Damn, that shit is right as rain, Big,” she said, pinching her nose closed to prevent any from escaping.

“Told you we had that straight fire,” Ruben said proudly.

Big smiled broadly as he thought of how he was gonna corner the cocaine market in Baltimore with his New York product. “You sure did, Ruben. Baby, get these gentlemen right so we can get up outta here,” Big told the girl. She nodded and began producing stacks of money from the shoulder bag she was carrying.

“Imma count that up for you, Duhan,” Ruben volunteered.

“I’ll bet,” Duhan said sarcastically.

“Say, do you mind if I use your bathroom?” The kid in the Orioles cap asked.

“Knock ya self out kid,” Duhan told him. As an afterthought he added, “But do me a favor and leave that door open, at least until my dude is finished counting this bread. Nothing personal, fam.” The kid mumbled something and went into the bathroom. He closed the door slightly, but left it ajar enough for Duhan to keep an eye on him.

“Man, I’m bout to rock these Westside niggaz when I hit em with this here,” Big said, patting the bag Teddy had passed him. “Homey you gonna get tired of seeing me after a while.”

“I never get tired of seeing money,” Duhan told him.

The kid with the Orioles cap came out of the bathroom a short time later, trying to fix the belt on his dirty over-sized jeans. Duhan just shook his head wondering how any real hustler could come out of the house any less than fresh. Duhan was a man who prided himself on being well kept and the kid couldn’t even remember to zip his pants when he came out of the bathroom. It was while staring at his crotch that something clicked in Duhan’s mind.

“What the fuck is that?” Duhan asked the kid, with his eyes still on his crotch.

“My dick, what do you think?” the kid asked sarcastically. He tugged at his zipper so hard that he almost broke it off when he finally got it up.

“I look stupid to you, nigga?” The tension in Duhan’s voice put everybody on edge.

“What is this shit?” Big asked looking from the enraged Duhan to Ruben.

“Big, I don’t know what the fuck is going on. Duhan what’s good with you?” Ruben asked.

For an answer Duhan pulled the tech-nine from between the mattresses and pointed it at the kid in the Orioles cap. “He knows what I’m talking about.”

“Yo, you’re bugging!” the kid’s hand eased to his side, but Teddy was on him with the barrel of his 9mm pressed firmly against his temple.

“Slow down, play boy.” Teddy calmly reached around and removed the gun the kid was going for. “Duhan, what’s good?”

Duhan marched across the room and yanked the kid’s shirt up. The kid pleaded for him to stop, but he wasn’t so foolish as to try and make him while Teddy still had the gun to his head. His heart skipped two beats when Duhan grabbed the wire that had been showing between the teeth of his zipper, and snatched a little black box out of the kid’s pants and held it up for all to see.

Duhan dropped the recording device on the floor and crushed it under his foot. “This is how you cocksuckers in Baltimore do business?”

“Man that ain’t nothing but a mp3 player,” the kid stammered.

“Lying mutha fucka!” Duhan kicked him in the nuts, crumbling him. Duhan grabbed the kid by the collar and yanked him back to his feet. “Who set me up?”

“Yo, I ain’t wit all this shit,” Big chimed in and tried to make for the door.

Teddy chambered a round in his gun and aimed it at Big. “Where the fuck you think you’re going?”

“Everybody just chill the fuck out,” Ruben suggested.

“Nigga shut the fuck up!” Duhan snapped at him. “These were yo people so the way I figure it you’re in on it too.”

“Duhan...” Ruben began, but got quiet when he found himself in the crosshairs of the tech.

“You say my name one more time and it’s gonna be the last thing to come outta your mouth other than your brains,” Duhan warned.

Teddy kept his gun trained on Big as he crept to the window and peeked between the curtains. “Du, if this nigga was wired then the police could rush this mutha fucka at any minute. We gotta bust a move.”

“Man, I don’t know nothing about no police or no wires. I was just coming to do some business,” Big tried to explain.

“Oh, we gonna do some business, but not the kind you’re looking for. Everybody strip,” Duhan ordered them.

“You New York niggaz is fixing to kill us!” the girl began to become unraveled.

“Calm down, baby,” Big tried to coax her while he thought of a way to get out of the mess he’d allowed Ruben to get him into. He honestly didn’t know anything about the wire, but it didn’t matter at that point.

“Fuck that calm down shit. I ain’t trying to die in no Super 8 for something I didn’t have anything to do with.” She began to pace. The cocaine had her heart beating at

a million miles per minute and her brain going twice as fast. She looked like she was working herself into a fit.

“You better control your bitch,” Teddy warned Big, with his voice laced with nervousness. All he could think about was the police rushing the motel room at any minute and carting them all off to jail. “Duhan lets get the fuck outta here.”

“Im not gonna die in here, I’m not gonna die!” The girl reached for her purse and everything seemed to move in slow motion.

Teddy’s finger involuntarily squeezed the trigger and the girl went flying across the room. At the sight of his girlfriend stretched out, Big lost it and tried to rush Duhan. The tech started at his knees and ended at his forehead, dismembering him. The kid in the Orioles cap made a mad dash for the door, but found out the hard way that he couldn’t outrun a bullet. The first shot shattered his spine, so he never felt the next four. The fatal bullet hit him in the back of the head, flipping him twice, and depositing him near the bed.

“Yo, what the fuck did y’all niggaz do?” Ruben paced back and forth nervously. There was blood everywhere and it took everything he had to keep from throwing up.

“It’s called tying up lose ends, pussy.” Duhan turned the gun on Ruben. “I trusted you, Ruben, and you tried to throw me to the dogs.”

Ruben’s tough guy exterior faded and he was crying like a school girl. “Du, I put that on my kids that I ain’t know nothing about no funny shit. I’d never cross a brother like that. Come on, you know how I do.”

Duhan laughed. “Yeah, and now you know how I do,” Duhan swept the tech across Ruben’s face taking his eyes and left cheek. Teddy, who couldn’t hold it anymore, threw up in the waste basket.

It took several minutes before Teddy was able to compose himself enough to form a coherent sentence. “Man this shit is all fucked up. What are we gonna do now?”

“We gonna take the money and the coke and get the fuck outta here,” Duhan told him while stuffing the stacks of money back into the girl’s discarded shoulder bag.

“Du, you know it’s gonna be some shit behind Ruben not making it back from this trip.” Teddy reminded him.

“Which is why you’re gonna stick to the script. We came down here and Ruben’s peoples were on some bullshit. They laid him and we laid them, simple as that.” Duhan said while wiping down everything he’d touched. “I know you’re spooked about all this, but I got you. Ted, I got a wife and kids I need to take care of and anybody standing in the way of that is food for the beast, ya dig?”

“Yeah, I dig,” Teddy said half heartedly.

Duhan draped his arm around Teddy. “Look at it like this, my nigga. We got the money and the work. Everybody who knows we’re down here is dead, so ain’t no need to trip off the bodies. We gonna sweep this under the rug and keep going with our lives.”

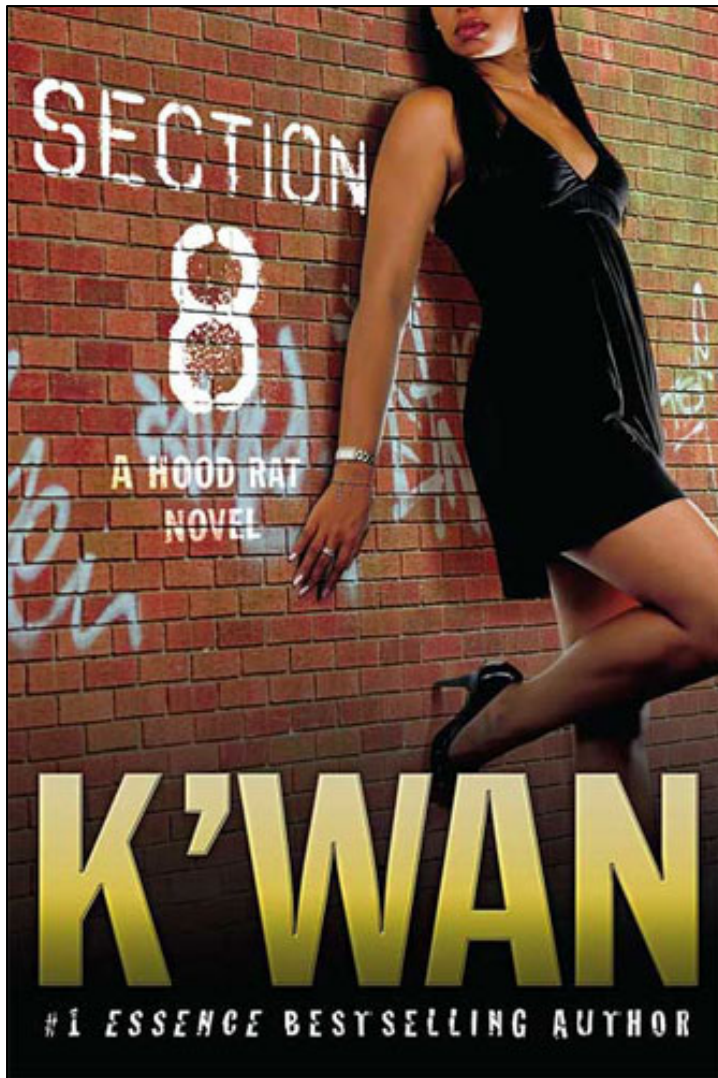
“If you say so, Duhan.”

A simple trip had turned into a hot mess. Four people had died, but Duhan was sixty grand richer because of it. When the police finally found the bodies Baltimore was going to be on fire, but Duhan would be long gone by then. As far as he was concerned

the trip had never happened. Little did he know their little exploits in the Super 8 Motel would spark a series of events that would change his life forever.

-End-

DON'T MISS:
SECTION 8



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